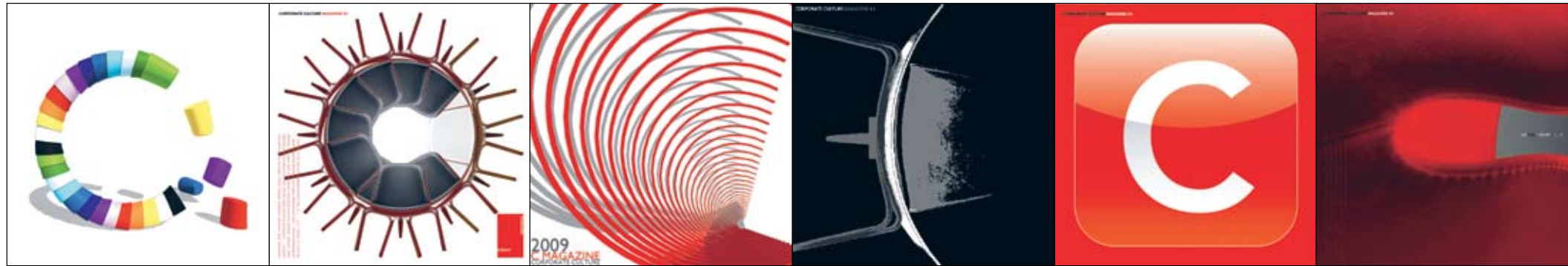


# CORPORATE CULTURE MAGAZINE #3

OFFECCT  
LOUIS POULSEN  
DESIGN JOURNEY  
LISA VINCITORIO  
ROLF HAY  
STOCKHOLM FURNITURE FAIR







<b>COMPETITION WINNER:</b> (Top left) <b>CARR DESIGN GROUP</b>	<b>COMPETITION ENTRIES:</b> (From left to right, top to bottom) <b>JASON ROWLES</b> 1.618 ARCHITECTURE <b>CRISANNE FOX</b> CRISANNE FOX DESIGNS	<b>MELISSA PINNINGTON</b> COTTEE PARKER ARCHITECTS <b>IAN SCOTT</b> WATTS DESIGN <b>JASON ROWLES</b> 1.618 ARCHITECTURE	<b>NIKHAT KARIM</b> BVN ARCHITECTURE <b>SABRINA SCIAMMARELLA</b> GEYER <b>PETER HARDING</b> <b>PETER HARDING</b>	<b>CELIA CAVANAGH-DOWNS</b> FUTURESPACE <b>NICK KOUGH</b> <b>CHRIS JORGENSEN</b> <b>JASON ROWLES</b> 1.618 ARCHITECTURE	<b>JEANETTE FALLON</b> FALINC <b>ELLIOTT BRYCE FOULKES</b> <b>JAN WESSELING</b> <b>ELIZABETH SCHOFIELD</b>	<b>ADRIEL LACK</b> DBI INTERIORS <b>CHRISTINA CHO</b> <b>AMY PRENTICE</b> GEYER	<b>PETER HARDING</b> <b>AMY PRENTICE</b> GEYER <b>JACQUE GALLOWAY</b> DONOVAN HILL
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# INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

According to the old saying, “when the going gets tough, the tough get going”. Paul McGillick spoke to Richard Munao about turning the threat of the global financial crisis into an opportunity for growth.

Spooked by the current financial meltdown, many people forget that after every economic downturn there is an upturn. Those that remember, though, can expect strong growth and a sharpened competitive advantage. Corporate Culture’s Managing Director, Richard Munao, is one of those taking a long-term view.

“What I’ve tried to do,” he says, “is really take this as an opportunity. While many people are reducing stock and staff, my point of view is that during these times you can grow. Now is the time to do things, spend some money.”

Of course, Corporate Culture has also tightened its belt in some

areas. But it has also been very strategic in its response to a downturn which is very patchy. As Munao points out “there are practices which have a lot of work on and there are practices that don’t and I think that a lot of those who have been doing the right things over the years are still getting the work, nurturing clients so that the clients keep coming back.”

“I’ve been with companies,” he says, “that have cut people, cut costs and inevitably you end up turning away sales because you can’t do things as effectively or proactively. You’re thinking with a different mindset. This mindset is: How do I survive? But mine is: How do I prosper?”

An important step in answering this question has been to look at market segments: where is Corporate Culture now and if they went into another market would that lead to growth?

months we’ve taken our business from zero to a million dollars plus in the chair market.”

In both these market sectors, Richard says that Corporate Culture previously shied away because they lacked expertise. But investment in new personnel – such as Martin Anderson and Rosie Williams with chairs – has changed that and created new opportunities. Richard observes that it is easy to do well in the good times, but that there is always a tendency to become reactive rather than proactive.

## IT IS EASY TO DO WELL IN THE GOOD TIMES

So, apart from targetted cost-cutting, dropping some non-performing products from the collection and running a tight ship in terms

ing on things to people we haven’t been able to visit because we haven’t enough people on the ground.”

Other strategies involve developing closer relationships with clients and continuing the drive to develop a stable of quality local designers. The annual Design Journey competition is one example, while new designers are being constantly brought into the fold, such as Lisa Vincitorio (who has worked with Alessi) and Ross Didier who is developing three new lounge collections to be launched later this year.

“All these things,” says Richard, “are about believing in ourselves, where we are and where we’re going. I think that’s the thing that can get lost in all these gfc’s – you start to put the brakes on too quickly. Having strong people in our business who are all very focussed on what we’re doing and who are very much part of our value chain. That I think is the way forward.”



Richard gives two examples of strategic shifts which have paid off for the company as a result of this kind of analysis.

The first is lighting which, until recently, Corporate Culture approached as an accessory. But it stood out as an opportunity. So, former Louis Poulsen National Sales Manager, Martin Anderson, was brought in. “What we’re trying to do now,” says Richard, “is introduce clients to

lighting a lot earlier, when they’re thinking about their furniture.” The result? A tenfold increase in turn-over for lighting.

The other example Richard offers is task chairs. “It was a little bit like lighting,” he says. “If someone asked us if we did chairs, we’d say yes.” Previously, he observes, “no one would come to us if they were thinking about buying task chairs. But I would say in the last twelve



**Previous:**  
Richard Munao, Director Corporate Culture  
**Far left:**  
‘VP Globe’ by Verner Panton (1969)  
**Left:** ‘Spiral’ by Verner Panton (1969)

of exposure in interstate and overseas markets, Richard has focussed on “investing in the future”.

“To be honest,” he says, “we almost need to do what we did when we started the business: Draw a line in the sand and go out there and pretend every day is survival mode. In these sorts of times, you have to be like a dog with a bone – you can’t let things go. We’re quot-



# SUSTAINABLE TRADITIONS



Swedish company, Offecct, is innovative in more ways than one. Rachael Bernstone spoke to its founder, Kurt Tingdal, and to one of its stellar line-up of designers, Eero Koivisto.



**Above:**  
Kurt Tingdal and Anders Englund  
**Right:**  
Exterior view Stockholm Showroom





# “WE ARE SCOUTING FOR NEW, TALENTED DESIGNERS ALL THE TIME”

As well as drawing on the rich tradition of Scandinavian design, Swedish company, Offecct aims to imbue its activities with a contemporary green tinge, according to co-founder and managing director, Kurt Tingdal.

“Offecct’s environmental strategy is as important as quality and design, and can be seen in everything from which glue is used at the office to the choice of materials, transportation and logistics,” Tingdal says. “Much of the product range has received the Nordic Swan eco-label and the company is ISO 14001 (environmental management) and ISO 9001 (quality) certified. The reason is simple – we want to take responsibility for the future.”

Tingdal founded Offecct with design manager, Anders Englund in 1990, choosing the name as an imaginative concoction of the Swedish word

‘offentlig’ (meaning public) and the English word ‘affect’. The play on words is a succinct representation of the company’s core mission: to affect public space and generate creative meeting places.

From its headquarters in Tibro, a small town in a forest setting with a long history of furniture production and handicraft, Offecct combines Swedish craftsmanship with international innovation, to create intelligent and sustainable design. The factory and production line sits alongside the head office and showroom, housed in a space that was re-designed by Sweden’s Claesson Koivisto Rune Architects in 2005.

Offecct works with established and emerging designers to produce pieces that represent “the most ecological alternative in all we do”, Tingdal says.

## “I WANT TO MAKE PRODUCTS THAT WILL BE LOVED AND USED FOR A LONG TIME”

“We are scouting for new, talented designers all the time,” he says. “A lot of designers are contacting us with ideas, and they know the environmental strategy is important for us. Therefore, they come with eco-friendly product ideas to us. And our own briefs to designers always contain an ecological aspect regarding choice of material etc.”

Offecct launched nine new products at this year’s Stockholm Fair, including two by long-time collaborators, Claesson Koivisto Rune: the ‘Etagé’ coffee table range and the architecturally inspired ‘Soundwave Village’ sound panels. “The facets and trapezoid shapes make the sound rebound at a 45° angle,” Eero Koivisto explains. “After we had worked on the pattern for a while, we realised it looked like the rooves on a lot of small buildings. To get the right feeling, we looked at aerial photographs of very dense urban areas. The Forbidden City in Beijing, where the spaces between buildings can be extremely narrow, was one source of inspiration.”

A fruitful partnership with young Japanese architect and product designer, Teruhiro Yanagihara, resulted in the launch of the ‘Grow’ sofa at the Stockholm Fair. Yanagihara’s understated yet poetic style is evident in two models which both feature an ingenious and attractive built-in table in the armrest.

Tingdal’s favourite product at the moment (it changes constantly as new products evolve from concept to showroom) was also unveiled in Stockholm. “I really think Carlos Tiscar’s and our re-cycling project with the chair ‘Louis IX’ is interesting, so if I have to pick one favourite, it would be ‘Louis IX,’” Tingdal says.

‘Louis IX’ combines traditional forms – in this case a neo-classical take on the French Louis XVI style – with modern sensibilities and environmental attributes.



The shell is constructed with re-cycled shampoo and soap bottles that are melted at high temperature into ‘dough’ that is pressed into furniture components.

“I realise that I am being inconsistent when I say that we really don’t need more products on the market,” Carlos Tiscar says. “But nowadays, furniture must be economical and made in a way that is as environmentally friendly as possible. I want to make products that will be loved and used for a long time, and that goal is also in agreement with Offecct’s ideal.”

**Previous Left:**  
‘Louis IX’ Low Chair by Carlos Tiscar

**Previous Right:**  
Interior of Stockholm Showroom

**Below Left:**  
‘Grow’ Sofa by Teruhiro Yanagihara

**Right:**  
‘Soundwave’ Acoustic Panel by Karim Rashid





# AMBIENCE FOR PEOPLE AND ARCHITECTURE

Masters of light, Louis Poulsen Lighting, are renowned for quality, style and craftsmanship. Anna Marsh takes us back to the company's beginnings and chats to Copenhagen-based product manager, Frederik Nyberg about products and the brand.



**ALL PARTS OF THE PRODUCT SHOULD HAVE A FUNCTIONAL REASON FOR BEING THERE**

**Previous:**  
'F+P 550' Light by Foster + Partners  
**Below:**  
'PH 5' by Poul Henningsen  
**Right:**  
Louis Poulsen Lighting Lab at the Showroom, Copenhagen  
**Far Right:**  
'Flindt 220 Floor' by Christian Flindt



From modest beginnings, Louis Poulsen grew to become one of the largest international suppliers of lighting, with a broad range of products aimed at the professional and private markets. The Danish company owes its success to many collaborations with influential architects and designers, including Paul Henningsen, Verner Panton, Arne Jacobsen and Alfred Homann to name a few. The products of these collaborations are today considered classics – timeless, styled using exceptional technology and offering exceptional light control. “Louis Poulsen offers state-of-the-art fixtures that go beyond trends. The fixtures are very often inherited from generation to generation,” explains Nyberg.

Entrepreneur and savvy businessman, Ludveg R. Poulsen first attempted to build his own business (1874), importing wine. But four years later the company closed. The opening of Denmark's second power station (1892) in central

Copenhagen, presented a second business opportunity for Poulsen, this time selling tools and electrical supplies.

Designer, Paul Henningsen – later known as PH – was the first to collaborate with Louis Poulsen (1925). Born in Copenhagen to the famous Danish actress, Agnes Henningsen, Paul's interest in lighting and electricity quickly took priority over his architectural studies which he never completed.

Henningsen was concerned with the relationships between light structures, shadows, glare and colour. His design process involved the use of collages: dissecting the centre, he created (collaged) skeletons which he could skilfully manipulate to determine the fixture's function. Henningsen believed that all parts of the product should have a functional reason for being there.

The three leading concepts driving Louis Poulsen Lighting designs are function, comfort and ambience. “First of all,” says Nyberg, “it has to comply with the Louis Poulsen lighting idea about FCA (Function – Comfort – Ambiance). The fixture should also blend with the architecture. The design is honest and every detail has its purpose. Louis Poulsen Lighting puts a lot of effort in getting the details right. The fixture should give a statement lit as well as unlit.”

A new Louis Poulsen Lighting product begins with a brief which considers the market positioning and technical issues – which is given to a selected designer to expand the idea. The process may also start as a design problem for a particular project or a designer may submit new ideas to the company. The company will always work very closely with the designers insuring the integrity of the company's philosophy is maintained.

Due to this, Nyberg comments, “it is often a long process to come to the final result.”

Louis Poulsen recently collaborated with Foster + Partners – internationally recognised architectural practice, based in London – to produce the F+P 550 Light, the first of a brand new range. Louis Poulsen approached Foster + Partners to design the light. “We had made a design brief with the goal to achieve a family of products, spanning from indoor to outdoor,” says Nyberg. “The first target was a pendant. F+P presented their first sketches, through much collaboration, we found, together, a design with a functional and ambient idea that we all believed in and liked.”

Nyberg explained the biggest challenge in developing the light was, “that the products should be based on LED.”



But it should not (like most other LED-products on the market) work as a projector.”

The F+P light presents as a luminous disk emitting predominantly downward light. Its textured aluminium finish, appears as a space-like flying object. Characteristics of the new pendant that fit with the Louis Poulsen Lighting initiatives include “its simple and honest design, exceptional lighting statement and sustainable materials,” says Nyberg.

Corporate Culture, has a long standing relationship with Louis Poulsen Lighting, spanning approximately eleven years. The classic pieces of the Louis Poulsen Lighting range “marry” perfectly with Corporate Culture’s collection. Most recently products available from Corporate Culture include the ‘Aeros’ by English designer, Ross Lovegrove, ‘Enigma’ by Japanese designer, Shoichi Uchiyama and ‘Flindt’ by Danish designer Christian Flindt.



**Far left:**  
‘Aeros’ by Ross Lovegrove  
**Above:**  
‘Enigma’ by Shoichi Uchiyama  
**Below:**  
Louis Poulsen Showroom, Copenhagen

It began as a straightforward design competition, but Design Journey – now in its sixth year – has evolved. No longer just about an end product, it is now a process which, in turn, is part of a developing strategy – namely, investing in local designers. As Richard Munao puts it: “Their future will hopefully be my future.”

“It’s very easy,” he explains, “to sit there and let everyone else do all the work and then say ‘That’s going to sell’. But it’s a lot more rewarding to put my money where my mouth is – I didn’t ask the designer to do that, I didn’t ask the manufacturer to do that...”

An interesting part of this evolution was the brief for this year’s competition. It actually had its origins two years ago at the Intérieurs fair in Belgium where there were a number of ‘hooded’ lounges – lounges which afford visual and acoustic privacy. Subsequently, Corporate Culture received a request for such a product, but found the existing products too expensive. Hence, the idea for a Design Journey brief: a room within a room.

Before the judges were called in, the entries had been reduced to six finalists, two of whom were then eliminated because they didn’t quite meet the brief. What was striking about the final four was the diversity – testimony to the value of an open-ended, more metaphorical brief.

And, yes, there was a ‘hooded’ lounge (by Damian Mulvihill and Susanne Mayer with the ‘Hug’ lounge) which celebrated a whole tradition from winged chairs through the ‘Egg’ and ‘Ball’ chairs to the Bouroullecs’ ‘Alcove’. The designers aimed to “specify a product with the ability to create a ‘lounge’ spatially but have the flexibility of selecting furniture which best suits the application.” Hence, the separation of the seating from the ‘hood’.

Jeanette Fallon and Greg Christgoergl from Fallinc, on the other hand, interpreted the brief more literally, designing a lightweight, highly transparent room offering visual relief (through the use of applied motifs from the natural world on the internal glass partitions) and acoustic privacy.

‘Lotus’ (by Vanessa Craig and Maggie McFadyen from Futurespace) came more directly out of the winged chair model – a personal and private cocoon which nonetheless acknowledges its context by opening up like the petals of a lotus.

Basically, a seat and a back, it is highly flexible and transportable and equally suitable in either a residential or commercial environment.

After much debate, though, the judges named Kirk Lenard’s ‘Zoe’ the winner. Essentially it is a highly inventive and finely detailed variation on the now ubiquitous pod – but resolving the issues of intrusiveness and monumentality which usually compromise pods as built elements in commercial interiors. In the words of the designer: “Originally inspired by the swagman’s cork hat, the ‘Zoe’ is a truly Australian device: a Hills Hoist for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century office environment.”

## THE KEY THING IS INVESTING IN THE DESIGN PROCESS

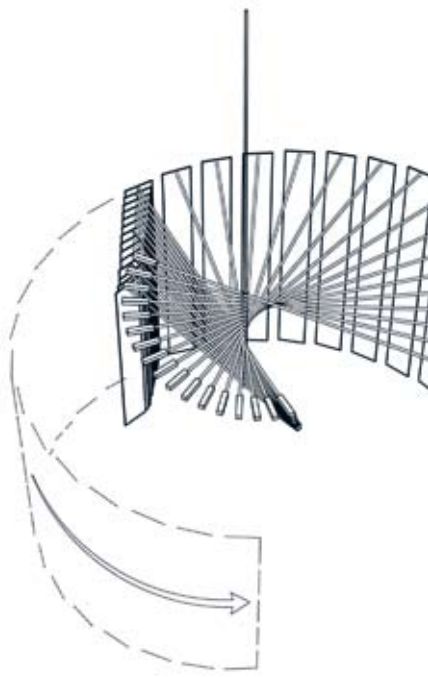
But unlike the cork hat and Hills Hoist, ‘Zoe’ is a highly sophisticated piece of engineering and a beautiful piece of sculpture – a mobile for the office – which offers degrees of privacy and transparency, intimacy with connection, energy and calm.

In the event, Corporate Culture has decided to develop prototypes for both ‘Zoe’ and the Damien Mulvihill and Susanne Mayer concept. As Richard Munao points out, “while there’s got to be some commercial reality to it, there are going to be some products which we don’t necessarily produce”.

The key thing is investing in the design process – having the finalists personally present their competition entries to the judges, sending designers to fairs around the world, engaging in an on-going conversation with designers and being prepared to back ideas which may never achieve commercial application, simply to keep the creative juices flowing.

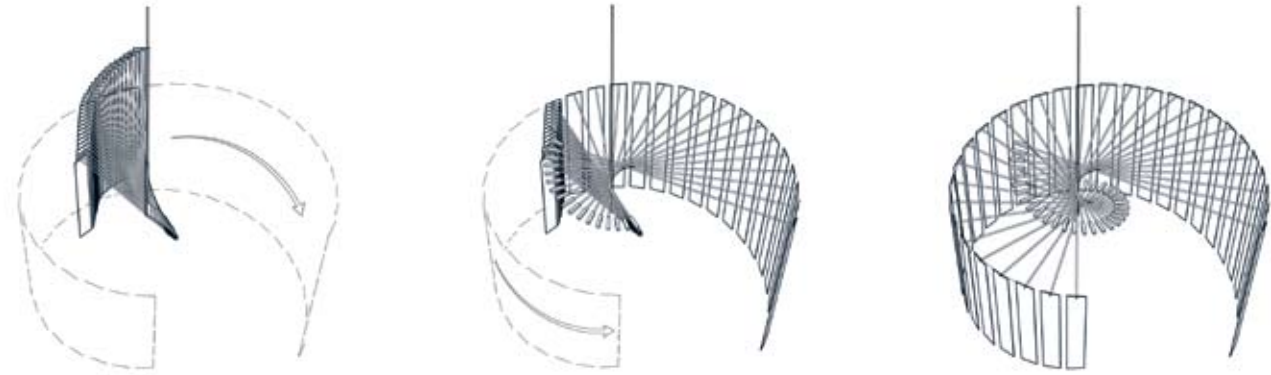
# A BLUE CHIP

The annual Design Journey competition is now more than just an annual competition. Paul McGillick, a judge for this year’s competition, reports that it has become an integral part of company strategy at Corporate Culture.





**WHAT WAS STRIKING ABOUT THE FINAL FOUR WAS THE DIVERSITY**



**Kirk Lenard of Lenard Design Associates**

Winning entry: Zoe



**Damien Mulvihill and Susanne Mayer**

Entry: Hug Lounge



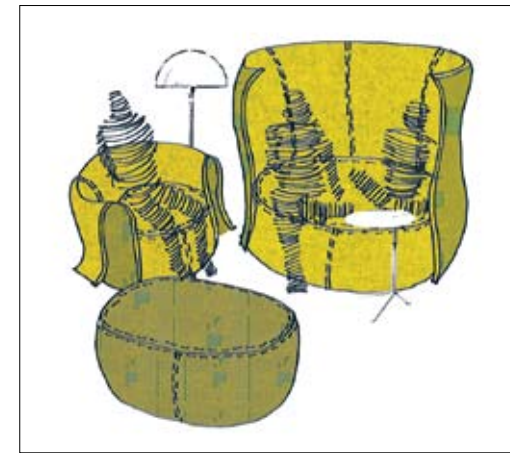
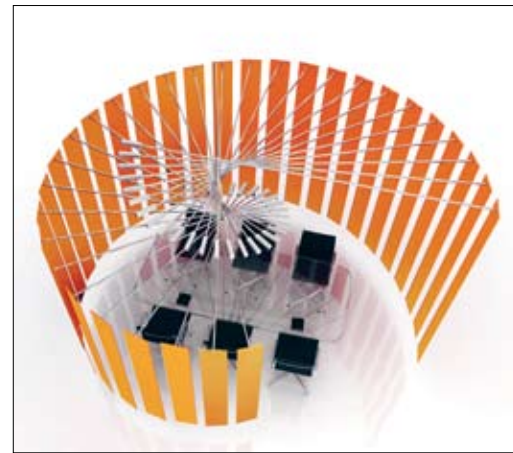
**Vanessa Craig and Maggie McFadyen of FutureSpace**

Entry: Lotus



**Jeanette Fallon and Greg Christgoergl of Falinc**

Entry: Transparent room



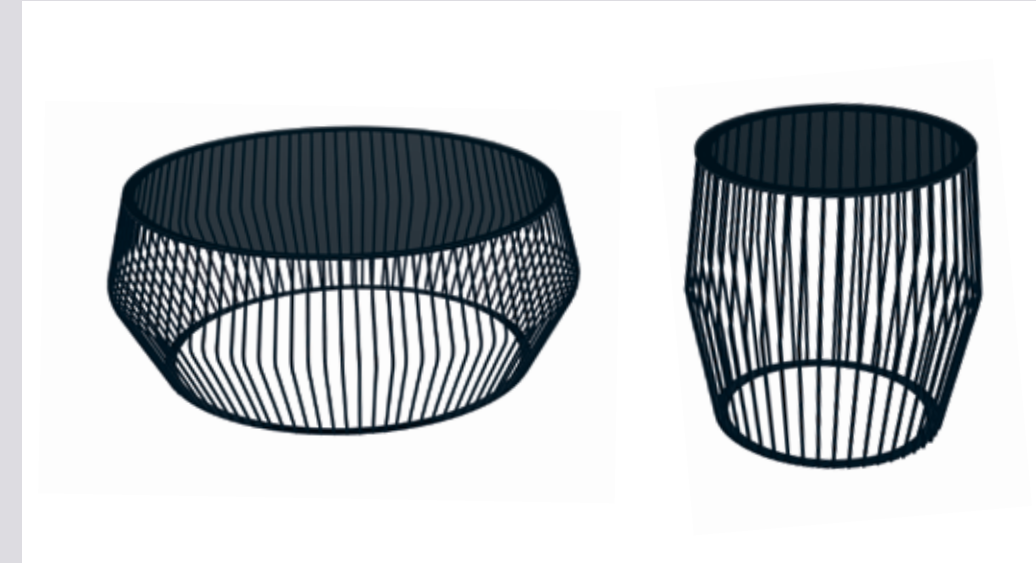




# FAST OUT OF THE BLOCKS

Now part of Corporate Culture's stable of designers, Melbourne designer, Lisa Vincitorio once worked in the Sydney showroom. As Stephen Crafti discovers, this experience was crucial in her development.

**Previous:**  
Lisa Vincitorio and the 'Urchin' stool designed when she was a student  
**Left:**  
'Array Table'  
**Right:**  
'Fruit Loop'  
**Below:**  
'Zucch' sugar pourer



Most designers spend years refining their work. But Melbourne-based designer, Lisa Vincitorio was already creating waves before she graduated from Industrial Design at RMIT University. In 2004, she took her 'Fruit Loop', a third year project, to the Salone Satellite in Milan. She had sent photos of the of the doughnut-shape fruit bowl to Alessi in advance, but the prototype was only handed to Alessi's Product Editor on the last day of the fair. "I asked him to consider my design. If he wasn't interested in it he could send it back to me," says Vincitorio. "Fortunately, he still has the prototype."

Three weeks later, Vincitorio received a call from Alessi. They were not only interested in her 'Fruit Loop', they were going to take the next step and carry out market research on her product. Within a year, the 'Fruit Loop' was on the market. The 'Fruit Loop', which holds up to eighteen apples, is made of polished stainless steel. Two circular disks, approximately 350mm in width, feature a circular cut-out, allowing the fruit to be arranged, as well as creating a stand. "I think I'm the youngest designer who has worked with Alessi," says Vincitorio, who was only 21 years old at the time.

Other designs created while still a student include 'Urchin', a stool made from laminated Hoop Pine and stainless steel. The seventeen legs of the stool are manipulated around a 360° axis, using a two-part mould. Exhibited in Tokyo and Milan in 2004 and 2005, it also received an award in Tokyo. There was also 'Revolution vs

Capsule', a seating installation made of foam with a light fitting at the centre. This design was specifically designed for bars and nightclubs, where conversations are often inaudible. "I love sketching out an idea, then transferring that idea to the computer. Then there's an adrenaline rush with the prototyping," says Vincitorio.

Still only 26, Vincitorio isn't about to rest on past success. She has just launched a new product, also with Alessi. 'Zucch' (Italian abbreviation for sugar) is a sugar pourer made of two layers of glass. "I wanted to create an illusion of something that floated. And I hadn't worked with glass before," says Vincitorio, who is currently in discussions with Alessi about two other designs. "They're keen to see as many ideas as possible."

From 2006 to 2007, Vincitorio was employed by Corporate Culture as part of their sales team. The position not only provided an opportunity to work on design, but allowed her to gain greater experience in retail. "It's not just about designing products that are aesthetically pleasing. It's also finding out what's required in the market and how people respond to design," says Vincitorio. "People want timeless designs that work well at home or in their office."

With this added dimension to Vincitorio's career, she designed a table at the end of 2008. Called the 'Array Table', it features mild steel powder-coated legs. While the tabletop can be made in mild steel, it can also be made from glass,



timber, laminate or marble. And although the prototype is in black, the design is available in a range of colours. An 'Array Side Table' was also designed at the same time, featuring fewer legs and more elongated. "I wanted to explore welding techniques. I also wanted to reduce the design for both pieces to three main components," says Vincitorio.

While Vincitorio has enjoyed early success, she is also keen to take on greater challenges. "I still get an enormous buzz waking up in the middle of the night with an idea," she says. Vincitorio also understands the importance of the relationship with Alessi so early in her career. "It obviously builds your confidence. But I still need to prove myself with every new project," she adds.

**"I LOVE SKETCHING OUT AN IDEA, THEN TRANSFERRING THAT IDEA TO THE COMPUTER"**



# DESIGN FOR ITS TIME

Making good design affordable doesn't have to involve sacrificing originality and uniqueness, or the element of surprise – as Rachael Bernstone discovered when she spoke to HAY furniture and accessories founder, Rolf Hay.



**“IF MORE PEOPLE BUY QUALITY FURNITURE, THE NEED TO REPLACE AND THROW AWAY DECREASES”**

While furniture and accessories company HAY advocates a return to the quality and craftsmanship of Danish designed objects from the 1950s and 60s, it also aims to produce trademark designs with affordable price tags, says founder Rolf Hay. “For us it is not about storytelling, but about making sense and about challenging the expectations about what is possible and what is not.”

It's an approach that has already attracted plenty of attention both at home in Denmark, where the company has three stores, and more elsewhere. Since HAY burst on to the design scene in 2003, many of its pieces have won major international awards. In February this year, the 'Plopp' stool designed by Pole, Oskar Zieta picked up a silver medal in the Design Award of the Federal Republic of Germany 2009, and the 'Nobody' sustainable felt chair, by Danish design duo, Komplot, won the Forum AID Award at the Stockholm Furniture Fair in the same month.

“The two pieces have a lot in common,” Rolf Hay says. “They both use new technology to make a new aesthetic expression. They both have an element of surprise: When seeing 'Plopp' you think it is blown-up plastic, and with 'Nobody', the surprise is that textile has become the bearing structure of a chair without using a frame.

“With 'Nobody' – which is made entirely from re-cycled bottles – the theme of sustainability makes it very relevant right now,” he adds. “These are topics which win prizes.”

Sustainability is an important consideration across the company's entire range, Hay says. “HAY focuses on making high quality and great designs, because if more people buy quality furniture, the need to replace and throw away decreases, which ultimately benefits the environment,” he asserts. “As we see it, the most effective way to make sustainable furniture is to give priority to quality and design.”

To that end, the company partners with ‘cutting edge’ designers and encouraging them to explore new frontiers in technology and industry. “There is no reason why we or anybody else should make something which already exists,” Hay says. “Therefore, originality and uniqueness has great importance when we choose our designers and products. That is how we can make improvements in terms of quality, sustainability and utility value.”

Following the success of the company's furniture range, HAY recently expanded its offering with the introduction of accessories such as rugs, cushions, quilts and bedcovers for modern homes. “We create individual designs – not concepts – which give us the freedom to take action whenever a good idea emerges,” Hay says.

Hay isn't sure where the company's serendipitous approach will take it next. “We have never had a desire to conceptually cover all areas of design,” he says. “It is not important for us to be able to deliver all objects to a home. We do not consider whether it ‘fits’ our collection, which means we never know what will happen in the future and which direction our company will take on a long term basis.”

One thing Hay does know is that the financial crisis that is stirring up the developed world won't harm the company. In fact, he sees it as a golden opportunity.

“We firmly believe that this is our time,” Hay asserts. “We believe that consumers will focus on getting value for their money and not pay the high prices that some companies charge for emotional values and storytelling. We have never wanted to become an extremely high-end brand. We give priority to essence over identity.”







**Clockwise from far left:**  
 'May Cushion', 'Neon Tubes', 'Display Me Front', 'Soft Coat Hanger'  
**Opposite Clockwise from far left:**  
 'Hay Vase', 'Nobody Chair', 'Lap Top Cover', 'Kontra Bed Linen'



**HAY RECENTLY EXPANDED ITS OFFERING WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF ACCESSORIES**





# STOCKHOLM FURNITURE FAIR 2009

The Stockholm Furniture Fair has rapidly become the key event on the calendar for Nordic design. Held at the Stockholm International Fairs Exhibition Centre, Anna Marsh reports that the fair is an opportunity for both established and new designers to show their work off to the international furniture industry.



**“WE ARE INFLUENCED BY WHAT WE (CORPORATE CULTURE) ALREADY HAVE”**



The inspiration and energy built through international travel is infectious. Karen Ninness and Jason Hess of Corporate Culture visited the Stockholm Furniture Fair (4–8 February 2009) to meet up with existing clients and to seek out new products (with a focus on lighting) that would complement the Corporate Culture collection. Karen sees the fair as an opportunity to assess how Corporate Cultures brands present new products to the market. The pair, whose roles at the company are very different, were surprised to see how parallel their tastes were. “We are influenced by what we (Corporate Culture) already have – timeless looks,” says Jason.

On show were a number of outlandish, eye-catching fun pieces, including a cartoonish, friendly monster-like chair by Normann Copenhagen, along with another easy chair, complete with a helmet.

The high back and slightly enclosing chair and sofa was something of a theme. “We noticed,” says Jason, “a trend for high-back sofas and easy chairs with angular elements – arms and shoulders – creating very much a room within a room.”

Karen and Jason’s enthusiasm for Wastberg lighting is quite evident. Wastberg is a new Swedish company with currently only four desk lamps in their range, each by a different designer, including one by the well-known designer, Michael Young.

Armed with only a handheld air compressor, Rolf Hay of Hay, demonstrated the construction of the new ‘Plopp’ stool, drawing the biggest



**“WE NOTICED A TREND FOR HIGH-BACK SOFAS AND EASY CHAIRS WITH ANGULAR ELEMENTS – ARMS AND SHOULDERS – CREATING VERY MUCH A ROOM WITHIN A ROOM”**



crowd of the fair. Working on hands and knees, he proceeded to inflate the flat metal piece and then manually bent the three legs into place. “It was so simple and effective. Who knew metal could be inflated?” says Karen.

On a tour of the Fritz Hansen factory, they meet Hans Mannerhagen (head ‘Swan’ and ‘Egg’ upholsterer) who led them through upholstering the ‘Egg’ chair. Experiencing this handcrafted technique was a highlight as it revealed the “blood sweat and tears” required to construct this classic – providing a new appreciation for the value of this piece.

Demonstrations like these are vital, as people get to experience the kinds of technologies used to produce a product – it presents the story behind the products. Reflecting on the response to their visit, Karen comments that “People were amazed that we had travelled from Australia to meet them and see their products. Our partners were just as appreciative that we had travelled so far.”



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